

# The 2019 General Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper takes a critical look at the February/ March 2019 General Elections in Nigeria. Our analysis is predicated on the conceptual relationship between elections and Democratic Development. We evaluated the conduct of the 2019 General Elections and noted that the elections were below the acceptable standards of a democratic election, wherefore the wide protestations that continually trialed the results. The paper also noted that the elections have once again brought to the fore some of the challenges threatening the survival of democracy in Nigeria. Finally, the paper argued that these challenges need to be addressed if the nation's effort at democratic development is expected to produce meaningful results, particularly now as the nation is getting ready for another round of General Election in 2023.

**Keywords:** Election, Democracy

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## I. Introduction

In developing countries in general, and Nigeria in particular, the holding of elections has been one of the most significant obstacles on the path to democracy. In 1960, when Nigeria won political independence from Britain under a democratic parliamentary system, there were great hopes that the country would serve as a model for other African nations in terms of democratic administration, given its size, resources, and people. Even after prolonged military regimes (1983-1999), approximately fifteen years of persistent dictatorship characterised by repression and violation of the people's political, social, and economic rights, civil societies, labour unions, civil rights organisations, etc. greeted the return of democracy with pomp and circumstance. Through political involvement and democratic elections in the nation, residents anticipated a continuous democratic practise and the dividends of democracy.

Despite this believed and with a multitude of competitive electoral cycles, (the 2019 general election polls inclusive) elections in Nigeria still often feature many non-democratic elements – electoral violence, electoral gangsterism and election rigging. As she strives to construct connected national communities, it is difficult to distinguish between democratic administration and autocracy in light of her electoral politics. Six elections have occurred in the Fourth Republic alone: in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, most recently in 2019 (Sule, 2019), and now in the impending general Elections of 2023. Surprisingly, despite almost 57 years of political independence, the nation has not yet adopted a true democratic culture, which is a prerequisite for successful administration and social progress. Citizens' lack of trust in election results, which are intended to be a way of enthroning political leaders in a democracy, is one of the primary causes for the current state of affairs (King 1988, pp. 55–58). In actuality, Nigeria's repeated attempts at democracy have failed due to its failure to organise free, fair, and transparent elections, which has impeded the country's effective democratic progress.

Nevertheless, the agreement among academics is that elections are essential to the political process in democratic societies (Ibrahim, 2006). Elections are the primary means through which the people exercise their constituent authority and sovereignty, as well as make periodic decisions over who receives what, how, and why. Consequently, electoral activities remain the most essential parts of political engagement. In the aftermath of democratisation in the 1990s in the nations of the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia, it was also said that the holding of free and fair multi-party elections is one of the key factors that would lead to

democratic stability (Nwabueze, 1993).

However, Nigerian elections have a troubled past, with consecutive elections marked by grave anomalies and controversies. This is mostly due to the lengthy years of military rule and the political cultural changes that followed. Organization of free and fair elections has also always been hard, which is why electoral fraud, which has appeared in a variety of ways, has been a distinctive aspect of electoral politics. This has resulted in the frequent breakdown of the democratic process, as happened in Nigeria in 1966 and 1983, respectively. Recent elections demonstrate that candidates for political office have declined to utilise elections as a means to verify their legitimacy.

Despite this, the 2019 presidential election has been won and lost. As usual, Nigerians have moved on with little or no interest in the legitimacy or propriety of the methods used to arrange this election. Although some observers noticed that pockets of violence and a number of anomalies marred the election, many others think that these flaws were not pervasive enough to significantly affect the outcome, despite the protests and challenges that have followed the election results. However, the 2019 general election in Nigeria presented an excellent chance to break with the past and restore public faith in the country's electoral and democratic process. In contrast, the events surrounding that election are still vivid in our minds. Not only have they highlighted the lack of commitment of Nigerian leaders to democratic ideals and practises, but they have also perpetuated the notion that this is the case:

Elections in Africa after the initial euphoria associated with political activity during decolonization quickly came to be viewed as meaningless political rites performed to grant periodic legislation for aspiring one-party regimes (Mackintosh in Chazan 1979:p36).

The critiques of the 2019 presidential election are truly grave and have beyond the point where they may be dismissed as the vitriol of bitter losers. However, with the 2023 general election in view leading to the amendments of the Electoral Bill by President Muhammadu Buhari and consequent announcement of new dates for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), it is still necessary to examine the conduct of the 2019 election by ascertaining its credibility and in the process expose the challenges it has placed on the future development of democracy in Nigeria, particularly as she is getting ready for another round of general elections in 2023. This is the goal of this paper. The paper begins after this introductory part, to examine the existing academic literature related to elections and democracy and the methodology applied, and also provides a conceptual background for the paper. Then culminates into the presentation of data and analysis, conclusion and suggest paths for future work.

## II. Literature Review

### Election

Elections are meant to offer organisations with a peaceful means of competing for political power, sometimes immediately replacing violent alternatives. According to Obakhedo (2011), political leadership in democratic nations is mostly recruited via elections. However, according to Dye (2001), it is the key to participation in a democracy and the means of consenting to the government. And allowing the governed to choose and evaluate officeholders who ostensibly represent the governed. The periodic election is an established norm and standard of worldwide practise and the means by which power and policymaking control are determined. Elections have been the standard practise of representative democracy in the contemporary age (Almond & Verba, 1963: 63).

Election is a legitimising occurrence that confers legitimacy to rule on political leaders. In a democratic government, residents are permitted to vote for their leaders in periodic elections, and those politicians vie for power by selling their ideas in a contest (Dahl, 2000). Therefore, elections are a crucial prerequisite for a healthy and sustained democracy, regardless of the operating system.

Bamgbose (2012) remarked that elections give the method through which various interest groups within a bourgeois nation-state may assert and settle their claims to power via peaceful means. Therefore, elections establish the proper method for guaranteeing that responsible leaders assume power. Eya (2003), on the other hand, defines election as the choosing of a candidate or candidates for office by means of a vote and a choice between alternatives. Thus, Osumah and Aghemelo (2010) clarify the fundamental purpose of elections, which is to choose the official decision-makers who are tasked with representing the people's interests. According to him, elections increase and expand citizen engagement in the political system.

Since elections are the means through which the people choose and exercise control over their representatives, elections are essential to democracy. Without elections, there is no possibility of a representative government. This is true to a considerable degree, since elections are likely the most dependable method for holding the government and elected representatives accountable to the electorate. In addition to facilitating leadership succession, elections as a concept strengthen political responsibility, participation, and the people's voice and authority. It also represents the final expression of the people's will and serves as a stabilising mechanism in any democratic process (Alapiki, 2004).

Regrettably, the history of election in Africa has shown that, the continent cannot rely on their various electoral structures and processes to evolve the kind of leaders they want, the kind of leaders that can improve the deplorable material conditions of the people (also see Mackintosh in Chazan, 1979:p36). As stated above, periodic elections have been held in Nigeria since the return of democratic government in 1999. The problem with elections in Nigeria is the manner in which they are conducted and the results, which have not been encouraging since 1999 until the 2019 General Elections, which were marred by logistical failures and delays, misconduct, voting irregularities, and violence that resulted in the deaths of at least 58 people since the beginning of the presidential elections and approximately 600 since the beginning of campaigning in November 2018. (see Mackintosh in Chazan, 1979:p36 and Wilmot, 2019). Wilmot (2019) said that Authorities and civil society organisations are now attempting to assess how genuine the election results were and how and who should be held responsible for any misconduct—questions that will have a substantial impact on Nigeria's democracy in the coming years.

According to Ladi, Shola, and Egwu (2017: p211), election integrity depends on the efficient administration of elections. As a concept, electoral integrity is primarily concerned with the degree of freedom and fairness of elections, or, more precisely, the degree to which a particular election satisfies the democratic criteria of competition, participation, and legitimacy (see Omotola, 2009). These indicators are operationalized further in order to define pertinent parameters that contribute to the identification of free, fair, competitive, and credible elections.

In its September 2012 Report, the UN Global Commission on Elections, Democracy, and Security said, "For elections to reflect democracy, advance development, and promote security, they must be conducted with integrity. It then identifies and emphasises five significant obstacles that any democratic system must overcome to attain election integrity. These include establishing the rule of law, establishing professional election management bodies (EMBs), establishing democracy as a system of mutual security, reducing obstacles to political participation, and regulating political financing (also see Elklit 2012, eight attributes of electoral integrity). In contrast, elections that lack these characteristics cannot be described as having integrity.

In contrast, elections that lack these characteristics cannot be described as having integrity. As a result, elections classified as 'well-run contests' may be labelled as 'credible,' 'acceptable,' 'genuine,' or the conventional language of 'free and fair,' and are believed to have integrity (Onapajo, 2015a:pp573–584). According to Alemika (2006: p2), such elections are frequently influenced by the following factors: (a) legal framework; (b) electoral system; (c) technical efficiency of electoral management authority; (d) relative autonomy of the electoral agency from interference by other organs of government and the ruling party; and (e) degree to which electoral processes, decisions, participation and outcomes are shielded from manipulation,

corruption, and violence. This demonstrates that evaluating the integrity of any election must take into account crucial concerns throughout the pre-election, election, and post-election stages (See Elkit and Palle 1997 and Pippa Norris, 2012: p4)

Be that as it may, the integrity of the electoral process and procedure goes a long way to affect the international image or reputation of a state whether positively or negatively.

### **Democracy**

The Greeks defined democracy as the rule of the people. As a philosophy, democracy is an ideology of human society and a manner of political existence, as a collection of beliefs and procedures driving and directing the conduct of members of a society not only in their political affairs, but also in their economic, social, and cultural relationships (Rodee , Anderson and Christol, 1957:83).

According to Lord Bryce (1921) Democracy is a government in which the will of majority of qualified citizen rules. While Merrim (1939 :p44) succinctly puts it democracy is not a set of formula or blue print of organization but a cast of thought and a mode of action directed towards the commonwealth as interpreted and directed by the common will. Holden (1974:p8) defines democracy as a political system in which the whole population makes or is empowered to create or determine key questions of public policy, either favourably or negatively. In his own opinion, Appadorai (1968:p137) defines democracy as a form of governance in which the people exercise the ruling authority either directly or via regularly chosen representatives. According to Raphael (1976), the foundation of modern democracy is representative governance.

Although, there is much debate over what constitutes democracy both in theory and in actuality. Kofi Annan (27 June 2000) is of the view that “While democracy must be more than free elections, it’s also true... that it cannot be less”.

Despite the differences, majority of these scholars Robert Dahl (1971), Rodee ,Anderson and Christol ( 1957), Schumpter (1976), Raphael (1976), Holden (1974) , Appadorai (1968), Lord Bryc (1921), Mirriemm Charles (1939) and many others, all agreed that liberal democracy contains some basic principles which include participation, equality, political tolerance, accountability, transparency, regular, free and fair election, economic freedom, control of the abuse of power, bill of right, accepting the result of an election, human right, multiparty system and the rule of law.

However, Nigerian democracy initiatives have been notoriously troublesome throughout time. As proven by Abbass (Shievvely, 2001, Gana, 1996, Oronaye, 1995), individuals in authority are expected to be accountable and responsible under representative democracy (Shievvely, 2001, Gana, 1996, Oronaye, 1995). (2008).

Commenting on the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, Daudu.J. (2015) noted that we underwent a transition from colonialism (1914-1960) to independence when we adopted the parliamentary democracy of the west minister Export Model and practised politics of bitterness, deceit, avarice, and disunity for six (6) years, i.e. 1960-1966. This was to be an important test of liberal democracy in Africa, according to Diamond 1988 and Sklar 1982, but the system disintegrated in less than four years due to widespread corruption, incompetence, election violence, and fraud (Diamond 1988 and Sklar 1982 cited in Essays, UK., November 2018). The novelty of the political class's excesses during this time contributed to the 1966 military coup and following coups. By the time they handed over authority to the civilian government, the military had reduced Nigeria from four regions to nineteen states.

However, from ancient times to the present day, important democratic institutions that carry out executive, legislative, and judicial functions have contributed significantly to the constitution-stipulated stability of democracy. Other institutions include political parties that collect interest in the political landscape and aim to organise and garner support for the candidates they provide for election to public office. (Jega & Ibeanu, 2007, p13).



In addition, it should be stressed that the formation and consolidation of democracy is a continuous process that demands work and dedication. Any democracy that cannot provide the fundamental demands of its citizens will be short-lived (Ojwang J.B 1990). Similarly, it is a well-accepted reality that in order for a democracy to exist, it must foster robust competition for all elected positions and widespread involvement of those with a constitutional right, obligation, or duty.

### **Election and Democratic Development**

Studies have shown a correlation between elections and the democratic progress of a nation. Existing literature on the democratisation of every society emphasises the importance of elections. Despite the fact that experts agree on the meaning and significance of elections to the existence of democracy, they dispute on the framework of an election that may foster and maintain democratic progress. For example, Omotola (2010) argued that elections are not the only guarantee of democracy and democratisation, since they may be used to mask authoritarian control. Schedler (2006) refers to this as "electoral authoritarianism" on page 45. Nonetheless, this dispute is said to have influenced the usage of terms such as "free," "fair," "credible," and "democratic" to characterise certain elections (Mackenzie in post 1963).

The backdrop of what defines a free and fair election has garnered equal interest from local and foreign election observers, election administration authorities, and civil society organisations. Mackenzie is among scholars that have pointed out the uniqueness of the context of a "free" election. He listed four conditions that must be in place before a free election can take place.

First, an independent judiciary to interpret electoral law, secondly, an honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections; thirdly a developed system of political parties, well enough organized to put their policies, traditions and team of candidates before the electors as alternatives between which to choose, fourthly, a general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rather vague rules of the game, which limit the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiments that if the rules are not observed more or less faithfully the game itself will disappear amid the wreckage of the whole system ( Mackenzie, 1963:p162).

In a similar fashion, Elklit and Svensson (1997: pp33-45) established a checklist for evaluating a free and fair election while discussing the emergence of election monitoring in developing democracies. Such as before the election, during the election, and after the election.

While it has been noted that there are methodological issues connected with proclaiming an election free and fair, it is commonly agreed that if elections are to continue the growth of democracy, they must be seen as free and fair.

Lindberg (2006:6) gave an alternative perspective to Bratton's (1998) arguments on the "surprising relevance" of African elections. For instance, he argued that the implications of conducting frequent elections are not necessarily limited to credible elections, and that electoral fraud such as political violence, fraudulent voting and counting of votes, inflation of voting figures/registries, and intimidation of voters and political opponents may arouse or incite political activism and solidarity in society even more than credible elections, particularly in the early stages of the democratic process. However, Jinadu (1997) and Pastor (1999: p.1) argued that the element of credible elections, especially in terms of organisation and legitimacy, is contingent on a number of elements. The most important of these elements is election-related institutions, such as the media, political parties, and the judiciary. According to them, these institutions are crucial for the proper organisation and management of elections, since the likelihood of an electoral crisis is primarily dependent on an impartial and independent election administration and organisation (Birch, 2008:p305).

Nevertheless, despite their differences, the majority of these scholars, Lindberg (2004) Bone and Ranney (1971) Brown (2003: pp. 141–46) Chiroro (2005) Ojo (2007:pp. 4-13), Edet, 2015, p. 14) Huntington, 1991:p661) Bratton's (1998), and Schumpeter (1942:p10), all agreed that elections are the "body, soul, and spirit of democracy." This argument places elections at the

centre of any endeavour to assess democracy, positing them as a procedural prerequisite for the substantive characteristics of democracy. This is the premise underpinning Kofi Annan's comment above.

### The 2019 General Election: An Overview

In general, much has already been said about the 2019 General Elections in February and March. Nonetheless, it is necessary to make certain election-related remarks. Since the restoration of democracy in May 1999, the 2019 general election was the sixth quadrennial to be handled by the civilian administration. In many ways, the elections were, in Key's words, "crucial" (Key in Ekeh 1989:p23).

However, the presidential and National Assembly Elections were postponed at 2.44 am on 16 February 2019 for alleged reasons of force majeure, largely informed by logistical and operational reasons, until Saturday, February 23, 2019. Four days later, the country's Independent National Electoral Commission declared incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari the winner, defeating his closest rival Atiku Abubakar by more than 3 million votes. On May 29, 2019, he was awarded a Certificate of Return and sworn in. On March 2, 2019, elections for governors of 29 of Nigeria's 36 states were conducted. The remaining seven states had off-cycle governorship elections. For the opposition parties and civil society groups that observed the polls, however, this was a tremendous affront to the whole concept of democratic elections.

The summary of the 2019 General Election was presented below.

**Table 1: 2019 Presidential Elections Results in Nigeria**

S/N	NAMES OF CANDIDATE	GENDER	PARTY	VOTES RECEIVED	PERCENTAGE
1	OSITELU ISAAC BABATUNDE	M	A	19,219	0.06%
2	ABDULRASHID HASSAN BABA	M	AA	14,380	0.05%
3	OMOYELE SOWORE	M	AAC	33,953	0.11%
4	CHIKE UKAEGBU	M	AAP	8,902	0.03%
5	SHIPI MOSES GODIA	M	ABP	4,523	0.01%
6	NWOKEAFOR IKECHUKWU NDUBUISI	M	ACD	11,325	0.03%
7	EZEKWSILI OBIAGELI KATRYN	F	ACPN	7,223	0.02%
8	MILAFIA OBADIAH	M	ADC	97,874	0.34%
9	YABAGI SANI YUSUF	M	ADP	54,930	0.19%
10	NWACHUKWU CHUKS NWABUIKWU	M	AGA	4,689	0.01%
11	CHIEF UMENWA GODWIN	M	AGAP	3,071	0.01%
12	OBAJE YUSUFU AMEH	M	ANDP	3,104	0.01%
13	DROTOYE ADETOKUNBO OLUFELA	M	ANN	16,779	0.05%
14	SHITTU MOSHOOD ASIWAJU	M	ANP	3,586	0.01%
15	FASUA TOPE KOLADE	M	ANRP	4,340	0.01%
16	IBRAHIM ALIYU HASSAN	M	APA	36,866	0.12%
17	BUHARI MUHAMMADU	M	APC	15,191,847	53.04%.
18	SHITU MOHAMMED KABIR	M	APDA	26,558	0.09%
19	GBOR JOHN WILSON	M	APGA	66,851	0.23%

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20	YUSUF MAMMAN DANTALLE	M	APM	25,039	0.08%
21	OBINNA UCHECHUKWU IKEAGWUONU	M	APP	3,585	0.01%
22	DARA JOHN	M	ASD	2,146	0.00%
23	ANGELA JOHNSON	F	AUN	1,092	0.00%
24	DAVID ESOSA IZE-IYAMU	M	BNPP	1,649	0.00%
25	ABAH LEWIS ELAIGWU	M	CAP	1,111	0.00%
26	OJINIK GEFF CHIZEE	M	CC	2,391	0.00%
27	ETIM EMMANUEL ISHIE	M	CNP	1,874	0.00%
28	UKONGA FRANK	M	DA	2,769	0.00%
29	AWOSOAL WILLIAMS OLUSOLA	M	DPC	5242	0.01%
30	OSAKWE FELIX JOHNSON	M	DPP	14,483	0.05%
31	OKOTIE CHRISTOPHER OGBENEORIE	M	FRESH	4,554	0.01%
32	REV. (DR) ONWUBUYA	M	FJP	4,174	0.01%
33	AKHIMIEN DAVIDSON ISIBOR	M	GDPN	41,852	0.14%
34	EKE SAMUEL CHUKWUMA	M	GPN	4,924	0.01%
35	ALBERT OWURU AMBROSE	M	HDP	1,663	0.00%
36	MADU NNAMDI EDOZIE	M	ID	1,845	0.00%
37	CHUKWU-EGUZOLUGO SUNDAY CHIKENDU	M	JMPP	1,853	0.00%
38	FAGBENRO-BRYAN SAMUEL ADESINA	M	KP	1,911	0.00%
39	KRIZ DAVID	M	LM	1,438	0.00%
40	MUHAMMED USMAN ZAKI	M	LP	5,074	0.01%
41	ADESANYA-DAVIES MERCY OLUFUNMILAYO	F	MAJA	2,651	0.00%
42	BASHAYI ISA DANSARKI	M	MMN	14540	0.05%
43	SANTURAKI HAMISU	M	MPN	2,752	0.00%
44	RABIA YASIA HASSAN CENGIZ	F	NAC	2,279	0.00%
45	ADEMOLA BABATUNDE ABIDEMI	M	NCMP	1,378	0.00%
46	SALISU YUNUSA TANKO	M	NCP	3,799	0.01%
47	A. EDOSONWAN JOHNSON	M	NDCP	1,192	0.00%
48	AKPUA ROBINSON	M	NDLP	1,588	0.00%
49	COM. ISHAKA PAUL OFEMILE	M	NEPP	1,524	0.00%
50	DR. ASUKWO MENDIE ARCHIBONG	M	NFD	4,096	0.01%
51	ATUEJIKE EUNICE UCHE JULIAN	F	NIP	2,248	0.00%
52	IKE KEKE	M	NNPP	6,111	0.02%
53	MIAN MAIMUNA KYARI	F	NPC	10,081	0.03%

54	IBRAHIM USMAN ALHAJU	M	NRM	6,229	0.02%
55	MOSES AYIBIOWU	M	NUP	5323	0.01%
56	FELIX NICOLAS	M	PCP	110,196	0.38%
57	ABUBAKAR ATIKU	M	PDP	11,262,978	39.3%
58	AMEH PETER OJONUGWA	M	PPA	21,822	0.07%
59	VICTOR OKHAI	M	PPC	8,979	0.03%
60	MAJOR HAMZA AL MUSTAFA	M	PPN	4,622	0.01%
61	GBENGA OLAWIPO-HASHIM	M	PT	2,613	0.00%
62	ISRAEL NONYEREM DAVIDSON DR.	M	RAP	2,972	0.01%
63	OSUALA CHUKWUDI JOHN KENNEDY	M	RBNP	1,972	0.00%
64	NSEHE NSEOBONG	M	RP	2,388	0.00%
65	DONAL DUKE	M	SDP	34,746	0.12%
66	DA-SILVA THOMAS AYO	M	SNC	28,680	0.10%
67	AHMED BUHARI	M	SNP	3,941	0.01%
68	BALOGUN ISIAKA ISHOLA	M	UDP	3,170	0.01%
69	MARK EMMANUEL AUDU	M	UP	1,561	0.00%
70	INWA AHMED SAKIL	M	UPN	1,631	0.00%
71	NWNAGWU UCHENNA PETER	M	WTPN	732	0.00%
72	ALI SOYODE M.	M	YES	2,394	0.00%
73	MOGHALU KINGSLEY BOSAH CHIEDU	M	YPP	21,886	0.07%

**Source:** INEC Dataset, 2019 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researcher)

## SUMMARY

A	TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS	84,004,084
B	TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS (AS COLLATED)	82,344,107
C	TOTAL NUMBER OF ACCREDITED VOTERS (AS COLLATED)	29,364,209
D	TOTAL NUMBER OF VALID VOTES (AS COLLATED)	27,324,583
E	TOTAL NUMBER OF REJECTED VOTES (AS COLLATED)	1,289,607
F	TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST (AS COLLATED)	28,641,190
G	PERCENTAGE TURN OUT (AS COLLATED)	35.66

**Source:** INEC Dataset, 2019 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researcher)

Muhammadu Buhari of the APC won the presidential election with 15,191,847 (53.04 percent) of the total number of valid ballots cast. This was closely followed by Atiku Abubakar, who received 11,262,978 (39.3 percent) of the ballots, or 92.34 percent of the legal votes, leaving the other 71 presidential candidates with around 869,758 votes. Not only was this less than 1 percent of the total legitimate votes cast, but it was also less than the 1,289,607 invalid/blank votes. The 2019 General Elections demonstrated the continuation of the history of incumbents winning the majority of states and seats in the Governorship election and National Assembly, as the governing party APC won the majority of states. The results of the elections for Governor are shown below (see table 2.)



**Table 2: 2019 Governorship Elections Results**

Party	Seats	Percentage
APC	15	41.6%
PDP	14	38.8%
No election held	7	19%
Total	36	100%

Source: INEC 2019 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researcher).

**Table 3: 2019 National Assembly Elections (Senate and House of Representatives)**

Seats (Senate)

Party	Seats	Percentage
APC	65	59.6%
PDP	39	35.7%
No election held	1	0.91%
Total	109	

(House of Reps)

Party	Seats	Percentage
APC	217	60.2%
PDP	115	31.9%
APGA	9	2.5%
ADC	3	0.8%
PRP	2	0.5%
AA	2	0.5%
SDP	1	0.2%
LP	1	0.2%
APM	1	0.2%
Total	360	

Source: INEC 2019 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researcher)

The results revealed that state governorship elections were held in 29 of the country's 36 states, while the election calendars in the other 7 states varied. The incumbent party APC won 15 of 29 states, or 41.6 percent (about 42 percent), while the opposition party PDP won 14 states, or 38.8 percent (roughly 39 percent). In seven states (19% of the federation) and the Federal Capital Territory, the gubernatorial election did not take place (FCT). The impacted states, Anambra, Bayelsa, Edo, Ekiti, Kogi, Ondo, and Osun, will not participate since their gubernatorial elections took place at various periods or during the off-season. This was mostly the result of earlier court decisions that invalidated the election of their rulers.

Also in the National Assembly (see table 3 above), the results revealed that the governing party APC won 65 of 109 senate seats, or 59.6 percent of the total, while the opposition party PDP won 39 seats, or 35.7 percent of the total, and other parties won 1 seat, or 0.91 percent. The APC

won 217 of 360 seats in the House of Representatives (60.2%), while the PDP won 115 (31.9%), and other parties (APGA, ADC, PRP, AA, SDP, LP, and APM) got just 19 (4.9%) seats combined. However, as at the time of data collection, eight seats remained unclaimed.

One of the distinguishing features of the 2019 General Election is that it marked a fundamental turning point in Nigeria's political history because it is probably the most intense and most expensive election ever held in Nigeria, with a total budget allocation of N234.5 billion as opposed to the 2015 N108.8bn (Krishi, Abdullahi and Ozibo, 2019, vanguard, October 5, 2016), with the largest number of voters – 84.2 million registered voters, we are told, the largest number of registered voters. It was an election that shattered all records, including the number of documented deaths, number of injuries, number of inconclusive elections, vote buying, militarization, inconsistency, manipulations, and violations.

The negative aspect of stressing the practise of democracy, particularly in a political context like Nigeria, is that little attention is paid to the correctness or appropriateness of the electoral processes. This issue seems to have been disregarded by the current literature. Also, we observed that little has been published about the finished 2019 Nigerian general election votes and their trustworthiness. This research aims to fill this need. The purpose of this research is to determine whether the conduct of the 2019 General Election poses any danger to the future of democracy in Nigeria in 2023.

### **III. Methodology**

The study used an after-the-fact research design. Review of theoretical and empirical literature pertinent to the 2019 general election and future democracy in Nigeria, including relevant books, journals, internet resources, seminar papers, magazines and newspapers, institutional reports including election monitoring reports issued by EU election observation missions, and human right reports issued by international non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International, was used to collect secondary sources of data.

The acquired data will be evaluated using content analysis to determine the amount to which certain allusions, attitudes, or themes permeate a particular communication or document.

The content analysis employs several works, substantiated reports, etc. The document is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction, while the second chapter examines the current academic literature on Elections and democracy, as well as the technique used, while giving a conceptual framework for the article. The third chapter presents data and analysis, while the fourth chapter ends and offers future research directions.

### **IV. Theoretical Framework**

This study which focuses on the 2019 general election is basically on political power struggling in a democratic environment, hence will be predicated on Anomie theory of conflict as the theoretical framework.

Anomie, which means "without Law," is a phrase used to denote the absence of social rules or normlessness. It refers to the disintegration of social relationships between a person and their community ties, accompanied by the fragmentation of social identity and the rejection of self-regulatory ideals. It was popularised by the seminal book suicide by French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1897). In 1938, Robert K. Merton connected anomie to deviance and suggested that the gap between culture and structure had the destructive effect of fostering deviation in society. Anomie develops when there is a disconnect between shared social objectives and the lawful methods to achieve them, or when there are no clear norms to govern behaviour in a particular aspect of social life. As a consequence, people would engage in aberrant conduct and do as they like.

Consequently, this circumstance exemplified the Nigerian government's inability to organise free and fair elections, policy failure, tribalism, nepotism, etc. There is an ingrained culture of impunity at all levels of Nigerian society and government, which began during military rule and has been a source of the country's greatest human rights violations after the transition to civilian

control in 1999 till the present day.

No one has been held accountable for perpetrating or directing these crimes. The Nigerian police often torture untried criminal suspects. The rhetoric and awareness of the issue by the government does not convert into concrete steps to hold the perpetrators accountable or prevent future abuses.

More than 58 Nigerians were slain during the previous presidential elections, and over 600 at the beginning of the 2018 campaign season in November (Claire Wilmot, International peace institute, 19 March 2019). Many of these murders were the result of large-scale, seemingly well-planned ethnic and religious killings. No one was held accountable for their participation in planning or encouraging these killings. During the same time period, numerous prominent Nigerians were slain in acts generally considered to be politically motivated, including the 9 March 2019 shooting of Hon. Temitope Olatoyo nicknamed Sugar of Oyo State (Sahara Reporters, New York March 09, 2019, 8:20pm)

In Nigeria, election violence is often perpetrated by gangs (usually known as thugs) whose members are openly recruited, paid, and even armed by public authorities. The administration has rewarded several persons facing serious charges of election violence and other sorts of corruption with influential and powerful posts. Nevertheless, the problem of governmental corruption is the most significant aspect in the modern causes of violence. Due to the concentration of wealth in the state, political power is very profitable and rivalry for political posts is fierce. As Richards Joseph remarked, Nigeria's present and future are contingent on a previous comprehension of the nature, scope, and durability of a certain pattern of political behaviour, as well as its social and economic repercussions (quoted in Aniekwe & Kushie 2011).

The Nigerian Judiciary has not lived up to its reputation as the average man's last resort. The legal system grinds slowly and uncertainly, which aggrieved parties find both annoying and costly. People want radical solutions such as "Bakassi Boys, Odua Peoples' Congress, Egbesu Boys, Arewa Peoples' Congress," Boko Haram, Biafra, Niger Delta militants, (vigilantes) in Nigeria, and military repression due to the collapse of social order. However, these measures may exacerbate the problem by weakening the State and diverting focus away from the need to strengthen fundamental institutions of government, particularly the police.

This way of political conduct is the prebendal culture, which views politics as a clearinghouse for employment, contracts, and official theft. In Nigeria, prebendal politics and democratic politics are two sides of the same coin; either may be flipped over to show the other... The system of prebendal politics permits diverse organisations and constituencies to seek accommodation of their own interests... The system is often inefficient and unproductive, and it leads to the growing prosperity of a relative few, meagre gains for a greater number, and unhappiness for the vast majority of individuals. Since it is a self-justifying system that legitimises a pattern of persistent conflict, and since its *modus operandi* is to politicise ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences, it contributes to making the Nigerian polity a simmering cauldron of unresolvable tension over which a lid must be regularly placed and removed (Joseph 1991 quoted in Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011).

These circumstances have given rise to armed robbery, thuggery, hooliganism, and abduction, among others, and have a tendency to normalise corrupt conduct in the nation. The result is that the initial offenders are not captured, either because the police are persuaded to turn a blind eye or because there are insufficient resources. This has prompted Nigerian youths to take up guns against the Nigerian federal government and political leaders.

## V. Data presentation and analysis

The operationalization of the measuring of the degree of an election's integrity is a crucial factor. Without necessarily delving into the scholarly argument on this topic, we accept election observation and monitoring reports as helpful tools for the exercise. Despite enduring genuine complaints, election monitoring remains one of the most well regarded devices for evaluating the

integrity of an election on a global scale. In addition, the approach addresses nearly every aspect of the other well-known approaches, such as the legalistic, best-practice of election norms by the international community, democratic theory, and international norms approaches (see Onapajo, 2015b), while simultaneously addressing the three phases of the electoral cycle outlined by the electoral integrity framework: pre-election, election day, and post-election.

To examine these hypotheses, we selected examples from a number of Nigerian states where at least 35 percent of elections were marred by fraud, ranging from very small (e.g., technical problems at certain polling stations) to serious, i.e., when election results were substantially manufactured. This provides us with much freedom to research our questions.

### **Pre-Election Period**

The time before the election had characteristics that reflected themselves in the subsequent conduct of the election.

The whole pre-election process, from President Buhari's refusal to sign the Electoral Act Amendment Bill of 2018 through the registration of voters, conduct of the primaries, and campaigns of the various political parties, left much to be desired. Numerous party primaries were held using opaque procedures. There were credible charges of an established practise of participation exclusion, particularly inside the governing party. Events designed to undermine the democratic process dominated the political climate. Among the most notable of these actions are:

#### **1. Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill**

Several times since 1999, the legislative frameworks of election administration in Nigeria have been revised to ensure that they meet the aforementioned objectives, so strengthening election administration and advancing the democracy process. For instance, the Constitution of 1999 (as revised in 2010) has subsequently supplanted all decrees from 2008. Similarly, the Electoral Act was approved and changed beginning in 2001, followed by the Electoral Act of 2002, the Electoral Act of 2006, and the Electoral Act of 2010 (as amended), under which the 2015 elections were held. While the 1999 Constitution stipulated the establishment, composition, and authority of INEC, the Electoral Act provides, among other things, guidelines for the registration of voters, party primaries, procedures for the conduct of elections, registration and regulation of political parties, and determination of electoral offences.

It is significant, however, because several of the planned reforms needed constitutional revisions to become operative. To accommodate the proposed changes, such as the new order/sequencing of elections, insistence on the use and mainstreaming of the Smart Card Reader (SCR), provision prohibiting carpet crossing once a candidate had won on the platform of a political party, and others, it was necessary to review the Electoral Acts of 2006, 2010 and 2018 as amended.

In accordance with its responsibilities, the National Assembly enacted a comprehensive new Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill on 30 March 2017 and sent it to the President on 26 June 2018. However, on December 6, 2018, President Buhari withheld his approval of The Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill.

In addition to various other concerns in the Amendment Bill, two difficulties remained. The like:

The proposed version of Section 25/30 of the electoral act (amendment) bill modifies the order of elections. In other words, the elections will now go from the national legislature to the state assembly, then the governorship, and finally the presidency.

The unofficial implication, however, is that the President would leave the legislators if he challenged before signing this measure. But if this were his last election, he would continue to dance to their rhythms till the very end. Given that legislation in this region of the globe is often driven by personal interests, it's hard not to believe that this is how the parliamentarians' brains are operating, and it's even impossible not to believe that Buhari would never sign!

(a) Section 49/ 138(2) of the bill to modify the electoral act. The bill also requires the use and

mainstreaming of the Smart Card Reader (SCR) in the electoral process, as stated in Section 49, whose amended version seeks the inclusion of Subsections 1 and 2, which recommend the use of card readers and other technological devices in elections, as well as an amendment to Sections 138 (1)(b) and (2) and the addition of a new subsection (3) This modification enhances the original provision in (1) (b) to include petitioning an election for non-compliance with published INEC manuals, guidelines, rules, procedures, or directives in addition to non-compliance with the Act. (Feb. 2018, 2018) The National Assembly has enacted the Electoral Act Amendment Bill of 2018.

Based on our views, the aforementioned measures are an attempt to rectify the flaws in the current legislation, which became evident in election petition rulings after the 2015 general elections. In 2015, INEC's Directives, Guidelines, and Manuals governed the use of the SCR, although the Electoral Act was silent on the subject. Numerous petitioners asserted significant noncompliance with the rules of the Electoral Act since the SCR was not used in the accreditation procedure. The petitioners argued that election results should be voided since the SCR was not used. This occurred in a number of instances, including the case of Wike Ezenwo Nyesom. Dakuku Adol Peterside & Others

However, the Supreme Court reasoned that the introduction of the card reader, which is meant to improve the credibility of those accredited to vote in order to reduce the incidence of rigging, was not yet incorporated into the Electoral AcBe that as it may, the clerical and drafting arguments put forth by President Buhari could not in any way outweigh the significance of amendments meant to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections. In terms of electoral management, the 2015 elections were, by all accounts, far more effective (Orji, 2014:p127). This impressive accomplishment was not unrelated to the reforms implemented across all social strata. The introduction of PCVs and the implementation of automated card readers for the accreditation of registered voters, for instance, helped to reduce the pervasive problems of multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of election results, as well as a host of other electoral ills. This does not imply that the election was flawless.

The rejection of these essential suggestions raised doubts about the commitment of President Buhari and his administration to serious electoral reform. Opposition parties, notably the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party, and the Coalition of 39 United Political Parties (CUPP), as well as leading civil society groups, such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Alliance for Credible Election (ACE), Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Electoral Reform Network (ERN), Citizen's Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), Gender for Constitutional Reform Network (GCRN), and the National Coalition on Affirmative Action (NACAA) ( see EU EOM, 2019:p12, Final Report, The Eagle online, 3rd September. 2018, The punch , 11 December, 2018 and The independent newspaper, December 2, 2018).

Consequently, the President's decision has far-reaching ramifications for the legitimacy of the 2019 elections and whether or not they could be deemed free, fair, and credible. Free, fair, and credible elections are predicated on the notion that the declared results represent the will of the people; elections are transparent when each phase is subject to public inspection and stakeholders may independently evaluate whether the process is performed honestly and correctly. However, beyond the Electoral Act (Amendment) bill, there were additional pre-election problems that greatly impacted electoral procedures and results. Above everything else, are:

(a) **The abuse of procedures of party primaries in varying degrees which characterized the selection processes across the parties.** There was significant evidence to suggest that political parties, especially the two major parties (APC and PDP), did not pay adequate attention to these needs' of competition, participation, and/or legitimacy of the process and conclusion. Recall that in Zamfara, a severe stalemate between the APC and INEC resulted in the APC being disqualified from fielding candidates (see EU EOM, 2019: p19, Final Report). Also in Rivers state, two parallel primaries were conducted against the court's decision, with Magnus Abe and



Tonye Cole emerging from both direct and indirect primaries (Saharareporters, Feb 8 2019). And two individuals claiming to be the Social Democratic Party's presidential nominee (EU EOM, 2019: p 20, Final Report)

(b) **Electioneering Campaigns.** If not pure hate speech, the amount of slander effort was shocking. It is crucial to note, however, that the presidential electioneering campaigns were largely seen as lacklustre, with the primary focus being allegations and counteraccusations about the personality and qualifications of the two top presidential contenders, Buhari and Atiku. The PDP frequently attempted to brand the APC as an Islamic party that would islamize the nation if elected, accused Buhari of having cancer and hence being unsuitable to serve as president, asserted that Buhari had a secondary school diploma, and so on. The APC had its own deviations and was always harping on the PDP's corruption, irresponsibility, wastefulness, and incompetence, among others.

(c) **Pre- election Political violence on or before as campaigns were gathering momentum.** There were major tensions in six of the most concerning nations. Starting with Lagos On January 8, violence erupted during the inauguration of the All Progressives Congress campaign at the Sky Power Ground, Oba Akinjobi Road, Ikeja, Lagos, as factional political errand boys known as thugs invaded the venue in their daredevil - look and subsequently disrupted the programme by engaging in a supremacy battle with one another. In Adamawa, the Numan, Demsa, and Lamorde local government areas witnessed repeated clashes between Fulani herders and predominantly Bachama farmers, resulting in hundreds of deaths, the destruction of dozens of villages, and the displacement of tens of thousands both within Adamawa and into neighbouring Gombe state. The actions of young gangs known locally as the Shila Boys provide an additional threat. Incidents of violence in Kaduna that set ethnic adversaries against one other.

In Rivers state, it sprang from both armed gangs and cults and the state's internal politics, notably the violent rivalry between the present governor, Nyesom Wike, and his predecessor, Rotimi Amaechi, resulting in significant cases of election-related violence. On 11 November 2018, gunmen kidnapped the organising secretary for the APC in Ikwerre local government area, Samuel Wanjoku, and another party member, Moses Ogu. Six days later, a search team discovered Wanjoku's decomposing corpse in a jungle, and police subsequently located his colleague alive. On 14 November 2018, over 25 gunmen stormed a PDP-organized gathering in Ipo designed to educate voters on the need to obtain their Permanent Voter Cards, resulting in two deaths and several injuries. Cole and members of his campaign staff were fired at by gunmen in the Old Bakana region of the Degema local government area on 16 November. The politician fled without injury. PDP and APC leaders shared blame for the assaults and many others (Thisday, 10 April 2019).

(d) **The suspension, by President Buhari, of Chief Justice Walter Onnoghen.** Given that the chief judge is legally authorised to have a significant role in the settlement of election disputes, this was exceedingly disturbing. Three weeks before the election, local and foreign players took this subject of the chief justice's departure seriously, claiming that it may throw a shadow over the democratic process. (see EU EOM 2019 final report on page 41)

e) The piecemeal distribution of cash for INEC and the security services, owing in large part to bureaucratic red tape, may have slowed down election preparations and jeopardised the administration and security of the elections. The presidential and legislative elections were delayed for February 23, while the gubernatorial, state legislature, and federal area council elections were rescheduled for March 9.

f) The political tension caused by the controversies surrounding INEC's participation in rejecting candidates.

g) The employment of the EFCC, ICPC, and CCB to suppress dissent.

From what we've seen so far, it looks like the risk of violence is highest in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Adamawa. Each state is different, but all of them have at least two or four major causes: a fierce battle between the APC and the PDP for control of states with a lot of voters, a lot of public money, or a lot of symbolic electoral value; local rivalry between former and current governors; tension caused by religious or ethnic differences or by conflicts between herders and farmers; and the presence of criminal groups that politicians can hire to attack their rivals and their own people. Local violence is a problem for more than just the places where it happens. It could have bigger effects. For example, if there was violence before the election, it could hurt the legitimacy of the vote and make it more likely that there will be disagreements. Also, local protests after the election could have turned into a national crisis (International Crisis Group Report 268/Africa 21 December, 2018, The EU EOM, 2019: p. 4). Concerns were raised about the fairness of the elections because of these problems.

### **The Election Period**

INEC said that the governorship elections in Adamawa, Benue, Bauchi, Sokoto, Kano, and Plateau were not clear, and it stopped voting in Rivers State. By March 23, supplementary elections had been held in all six states, and between April 2 and 5, 2019, the results of the election in Rivers were announced. On April 13, supplementary elections were held where needed, and between April 13 and 15, 2019, all of the results were announced. By April 19, 2019, certificates of return had been sent out.

However, Summary of the Election Day Activities includes:

(a) **Opening of Polling Units:** There were signs that the polls didn't open on time in different parts of the country (see Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), preliminary Report, February 24, 2019, and EU EOM, final Report, 2019:p36).

(b) Voting, counting, and announcing the results at the Polling Units: Even so, there were some problems with accreditation. Most polling places made sure that voting was kept secret. There were, however, times when secrecy was broken (see TMG, preliminary Report, February 24, 2019 and also EU EOM, 2019:p36 final report).

During the 2019 general election, paramilitary and security forces were put in place to keep things safe. It is also said that female officers played important roles in keeping the peace. Most of the time, these security guards were polite, worked well together, and showed a high level of professionalism. Still, many voters were worried about the large number of security personnel.

Violence could not be left out of the election. Based on new information from the media and other sources, about 145 people were killed in election-related violence during the campaign and the three election days. Of those, 84 were killed in the South South zone. This number is about the same as what we saw in 2015.

Up until the elections on February 23, about 64 people were said to have been killed during the campaign. Twenty-one of these deaths happened in the week after the elections were put off. On February 23, March 24, and March 9, about 35 people were said to have been killed. But it's hard to get exact numbers of incidents and deaths, and people have different ideas about what counts as electoral and political violence (EU EOM, 2019, p33, final report)

During all three Election Day periods, there were also attacks on INEC buildings and officials in states like Akwa Ibom, Imo, Katsina, Ogun, Ondo, and Rivers. (See EU EOM's final report, 2019:pp33-34, Sahara Reporters, New York, June 10, 2019). Most of the time, security forces have been involved in serious abuses, such as arbitrary arrests, long detention without trial, torture, extrajudicial killings, rape, and sexual violence against women and girls in camps for displaced people.

But according to all reports, the 2019 General Election was ruined by political violence and people trying to stop people from voting.

d) **Cancellation of ballots:** Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement

(YIAGA), also known as YIAGA Africa, determined that 3,3 percent of all registered voters had their votes declared invalid by INEC. This is four times the rate from 2015, when fewer than 1 percent of all registered voters were affected by cancelled polling places. Nationwide election cancellations happened. States where the percentage of registered in cancelled polling units exceeded 4 percent of registered voters include: Rivers, where a total of 942,368 ballots were cancelled, representing more than a quarter of registered voters (22.7%), Nasarawa (9.5%), Akwa Ibom (8.5%), Cross River (8.0%), Plateau (5.7%), Kogi (5.2%), Benue (4.9%), and Kaduna (4.9%). (4.7 percent ). Yiaga Africa requests that INEC offer reasons for the high cancellation rates in certain states. (Yiaga Africa, 15 October 2018 15:07)

(e) Variations between Registered Voters Announced Prior to the Election and During Collation. Prior to February 23, 2019, INEC communicated 84,004,084 registered voters and provided state-by-state breakdowns of this number. The number of registered voters announced by state returning officers at the national collation centre did not match the pre-election estimates. As reported, the total number of registered voters decreased by 1,659,959, bringing the total to 82,344,125. Nonetheless, WTV observers recorded the number of registered voters at sampled polling units, which was largely consistent with the polling unit-level registration data published by INEC on the register, which had 84,004,084 registrants (Yiaga Africa, Statement on the 2019 Presidential Election Results, Wednesday, February 27, 2019).

#### (f) Voter turnout

**Table 5: Voter turnout in Presidential Election 1999 – 2019**

Elections	Registered voters	Turnout	Percentage
1959 General Election	9,043,404	7,189,797	79.50
1979 Presidential Election	48,633,782	16,846,633	34.00
1983 Presidential Election	65,304,818	25,430,096	38.00
1993 Presidential Election	37,826,460	14,321,963	37.00
1999 Presidential Election	57,838,945	30,280,052	52.30
2003 Presidential Election	60,823,022	42,018,735	69.00
2007 Presidential Election	61,567,036	35,397,517 valid votes	57.50
2011 Presidential Election	73,528,048	39,469,484	53.70
2015 Presidential Election	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.65
2019 Presidential Election	82,344,107	28,614,190	35.66

**Source:** Updated from Temitope (2015) and Hamadia (2014)

Voter participation in the 2019 presidential election was the lowest compared to prior elections. In a statement issued on February 25, 2019, YIAGA AFRICA gave an initial forecast of voting participation. The official findings of INEC for voter turnout and rejected ballots are broadly similar with the estimations of YIAGA AFRICA WTV. YIAGA's turnout estimates are based on votes declared at polling places (before any results were cancelled), and are thus derived using the total votes cast at all polling locations, including those that were cancelled, divided by the number of registered voters. YIAGA AFRICA predicts that 37.5% of eligible voters cast ballots, with a margin of error of 1.6%. (between 35.9 percent and 39.1 percent ). INEC's official participation rate is 35.66 percent (based on total votes cast only in polling units where the results were not cancelled divided by registered voters). In addition, YIAGA AFRICA calculated turnout using the official INEC number of 84,004,084 registered voters. Similarly, YIAGA AFRICA estimates rejected votes to be 4% with a margin of error of 0.6% (between 3.4% and 4.6%), although INEC's official number for rejected ballots is 5%. These findings are reliable

(YIAGA AFRICA, Statement on the 2019 Presidential Election Results, Wednesday, February 27, 2019).

Consequently, it grew from 52.30 percent in the 1999 election to 69.10 percent in the 2003 election. The increase may be attributable to the fact that, unlike in 1999, when there was so much scepticism about the actuality of the transition plan, by 2003 it had become evident that the democratic process was on track; therefore, the increase in the amount of public engagement. Nonetheless, by 2007, the participation rate had decreased to 57.50 percent. This decreased further to 53.70 percent in 2011, 43.65 percent in 2015, and 35.66 percent in 2019.

These numbers pose important concerns that cannot be ignored lightly. For example, why is there an overall fall in voter turnout? As a whole, declining voter turnout can be attributed to general voter apathy, which is a result of a number of other factors, such as declining confidence in the institutional capacity, autonomy, and professionalism of INEC to conduct credible, free, and fair elections where votes count, and the inability of democracy to respond to the democratic and developmental aspirations and yearnings of the people.

Obviously, this list is not comprehensive. The components have not been listed in a precise logical sequence and overlap. Since each of these parts merits a minimum of one complete essay, we may leave the rest for future investigation. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), which deployed 73 observers to monitor voting, counting, and the collation of results in 22 states across all geopolitical zones, captured the magnitude of what transpired during the election, expressed grave concerns about the electoral process, and urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to investigate "systemic failures." According to the Report, the 2019 State and Federal elections failed to meet even the most fundamental international and regional requirements for democratic elections, demonstrating the necessity for a national conversation on electoral integrity and participation reform (Premium Times, March 11, 2019)

The Report of the European Union Election Observation Mission also includes the findings of other election observers, including the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Labour Election Monitoring Team (LEMT), the Electoral Reform Network (ERN), ECOWAS Election Observation Mission (EEOM), African Union Election Observation Mission, Commonwealth Observer Group, ETC, and the majority of Nigerian voters. Thus, as a result of rampant electoral fraud, the governing party achieved a landslide win at the elections, capturing the majority of all elected offices at all levels. As evidenced by the 2019 elections in Nigeria, significant adjustments are necessary.

### **The Post-Election Period**

While it is true that the election was marred by pockets of violence and a number of anomalies, many analysts think that these issues were not pervasive enough to severely affect the result. However, the protests and contestations that followed the election results were remarkable. In several states, including as Rivers, Imo, and Akwa Ibom State, etc., there were orchestrated riots by youths, opposition parties, and civil society organisations. In Rivers State, for instance, chaos broke out after the presidential election result was announced on Tuesday evening.

As representatives of the All Progressives Congress (APC) protested the deletion of the contentious Emohua Local Government Area (LGA) results, the collation process descended into mayhem. In Akwa Ibom State, too, members of the opposition APC demonstrated over alleged anomalies in the state polls, demanding their complete annulment (Sahara Reporters, New York, Feb. 26, 2019). Equally, electoral courts around the nation have been inundated with petitions from disgruntled contestants, such as Atiku Abubakar, who disputed the election results on the grounds that it was a "sham."

### **The Elections and the Challenges of the Future**

General elections for 2019 have been won and lost. But if, in many instances, elections were manipulated or stained with violence, and people accept it, then what should be expected of the



future? In light of the fact that the elections were "deeply flawed" and "far short of the basic international and regional standards for democratic elections" (EU EOM, 2019), that Nigerians were dissatisfied with the entire electoral process, and that widespread protests followed the election, a number of future challenges can be identified.

These findings are noteworthy on their own for a variety of reasons. Indeed, a superficial examination reveals just a portion of the tale. The findings highlight bigger themes of continuity and change upon closer inspection. In other words, the results of the 2019 presidential election confirmed some notable trends from previous presidential elections, eliminated others, and established some new patterns that will need to be observed in future elections to determine if they will also become a pattern or trend in future presidential elections. Important to establishing this stance is a brief examination of the outcomes of prior elections, including most likely the 2015 presidential election (not included here, but see INEC data set, 2015).

It has historically tended to be a contest between the two most significant political parties in the nation, often the governing party and the most prominent opposition party. While there have always been several candidates in presidential elections, parties other than the main two have seldom had a significant effect on the outcome. This pattern was seen in all presidential elections since 1999 (see INEC data set from 1999 to 2019).

In the 2003 presidential election (which had 20 candidates), the two top candidates/parties, PDP and ANPP, received 61.94 and 32.19 percent of the vote, respectively. This represents 94.13 percent of all votes cast, leaving 18 candidates/parties with less than 6 percent of all votes cast. The pattern continued in 2007, when the two largest parties – the PDP and ANPP – received 69.60 percent and 18.66 percent, respectively, of the total votes cast, for a total of 89.16 percent, leaving the remaining 23 candidates with little more than 10 percent of the total votes cast.

Nonetheless, stiffer competition between the two largest parties was reestablished in the 2011 presidential election, when the PDP and CPC received 58.89 and 31.98 percent of the vote, respectively. This represents 90.87 percent of all votes cast, leaving the other 18 candidates/parties with an insignificant 9.13 percent of all votes cast. Yet, the most intense fight between the two largest parties occurred in the 2015 presidential election, when the victorious APC and the runner-up PDP received 53.96 percent and 44.96 percent, respectively, of the total votes cast. This results in a total of 98.92% of all votes cast, leaving the other 12 candidates/parties with just 1.18% of all votes cast, offering the strongest proof that parties outside the top two have no significant effect on the election outcomes.

The content of Nigeria's election procedures, particularly the function of the electoral administration agency (INEC), requires immediate adjustment. Elkit and Reynolds (2000) and Mozaffar and Schedular (2001) are two examples of academics who have attempted to explain the influence of election administration on democratic sustainability. The consensus among these academics is that the electoral management body plays a crucial role in the electoral administration, which determines whether the election will be deemed "free" and "fair" and if its conclusion would be acceptable to both victors and losers. Therefore, the excessive concentration of authority within INEC is a major issue in Nigerian politics. INEC's ability to conduct credible and transparent elections has been questioned by Fall, Hounkpe, Jinadu, and Kambale (2011), Ajayi (2012), and David et al. (2014), among others. Concerns about the impartiality of INEC to conduct free and fair elections have been heightened by the incumbent president's monopoly on selecting electoral officials.

b) The INEC's credibility issues exacerbate voter apathy and civic irresponsibility. During the 2019 general election, just 35% of the approximately 72.7 million registered voters participated, compared to 43.65% of the 69.7million registered voters in 2015. (Thisday Newspaper, April, 2019). In Nigerian elections since 1999, 49.7 percent of registered voters have participated on average. Consequently, this (2019 election) was reportedly one of the lowest voter turnouts in modern Africa! In the March 9 and March 23 elections for Governor and state Houses of Assembly, voter participation was much lower (APR 04, 2019 Sahara Reporter). The upshot of



this trend is that, all else being equal, it was anticipated that more people will vote in the 2019 elections than in the previous elections.

Thirdly, the Nigerian election process has a detrimental effect on the nation as a whole. This is because revenues that might be utilised to support business-required infrastructure are instead used to fund elections. This has resulted in ongoing borrowing and a budget deficit for the year 2018. INEC estimated the overall budget allocation for the 2019 elections at N234.5 billion (Premiums times, October 11, 2018). It is essential to note that INEC's 2019 budget eclipses that of the majority of federal states. The Osun state budget for 2019 is N152 billion. The budget of Ekiti state is N129.9 billion. Kwara State has a N157bn budget. While the budget of Edo state is N183.7bn (The nation, December 27, 2018). Notably, this would be financed by government borrowing.

Fourth, democratic administration in its broadest meaning encompasses a variety of challenges, the establishment of responsible institutions being among the most crucial (Harneit-Sievers 2004). Political parties are another category of essential institutions in every functioning democracy. Under present Nigerian circumstances, however, the majority of political parties are just coalitions of important persons and small organisations that can control and manage party structures, candidates, and the election process.

The selection of political officeholders in Nigeria is a significant obstacle to democracy. The conduct of party primaries in preparation for the 2019 general elections has caused more serious intra-party crises than in previous elections, and this has had a significant influence on the results of the polls. Notable is the inability of several governors to install their favoured candidates as party nominees. In the states of Imo, Rivers, Ogun, Lagos, and Delta, etc., intraparty splits within the governing party adversely harmed the fortunes of the ruling party, and the resulting murders portend badly for the election climate. In the states of Rivers and Zamfara, both INEC's penalties and the Supreme Court's judgement have deprived the governing party at the centre of any serious vote harvesting opportunities.

In conclusion, it is evident that the core difficulty of the practise of government and politics in Nigeria stems from the people's perceptions of concerns pertaining to the notion and function of democracy and politics. Claude Ake, a Nigerian researcher, has previously hypothesised that both the ruled and the rulers are complicit in the path ahead. Electoral democracy is not dependent on the selfless efforts of other individuals or nations. "People must do it themselves or nothing will happen." Problems such as election fraud and violence, corruption, political godfatherism, and institutional weakness cannot be explained apart from a misunderstanding of the meaning and purpose of democracy and politics.

While Ekeh (1975) has attempted to explain the origin of the perception problem by tying it to the effects of colonialism, Diamond (1999) has demonstrated that political culture not only affects the nature and viability of democracy, but also that democracy requires a distinct set of political values and orientation from its citizens and that politics, beliefs about democratic legitimacy, is a central factor in democratic consolidation. Similarly, Omoruyi (2003) has pointed out correctly that:

Nigeria lived too long under the military to appreciate democratic life.... Not all people who live in a society or those who become politicians are democratic, it is an acquired behavior.

Thus, the administration of the 2019 elections and the contestations that have continued to trail the results has clearly exposed the lapses in the electoral processes in Nigeria. Importantly, it has also reaffirmed our earlier position that:

In the context of emerging democracies where there is great need for the electoral outcome to appear acceptable to all the parties involved in the electoral process and competition, the electoral management body, the political class, the electorate and other institutions of government must demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles (Alumona, 2006:47)

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, we have attempted to investigate the conduct of the 2019 General Election and the obstacles it has posed for the future growth of democracy in Nigeria. We remarked that the election represented a turning point in Nigeria's political history since it was likely the most heated and costly election ever conducted in Nigeria. Following a discussion of why the 2019 presidential election is significant, we were able to identify and examine what we deemed to be the most important issues in the elections: Electoral Act (Amendment) bill, pre-election Violence, party primaries and candidate selection, electioneering campaigns, Opening of Polling Units, accreditation and Voting, Security Deployment/Conduct, cancelled ballots, voter turnout, and discrepancies between registered Voters.

Given that the elections were "seriously defective" and fell well short of fundamental international and regional democratic election norms, we recognised major difficulties or challenges that the 2019 General Election has posed for the future of democracy, notably the impending 2023 election in Nigeria. These problems include, but are not limited to, INEC's credibility issues, citizens' perceptions of issues pertaining to the concept and purpose of democracy and politics, the creation of accountable institutions (political parties), the over-centralization of power in INEC's responsibility, election postponement, etc.

In the end analysis, the report concludes that extensive vote manipulation, pockets of violence, and a number of anomalies occurred throughout the election, hence diminishing the overall efficacy of electoral administration and the democratic aspects of the elections. In light of these difficulties, we contend that the 2019 General Election was not credible, and that the polls have once again highlighted some of the obstacles confronting the future development of democracy in Nigeria.

Based on the findings generated in this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed if the nation's effort at democratic development is expected to provide long lasting results.

First, is the need to restructure the Nigerian state. The violent means through which Nigerians seek to control the machinery of state power through election raises a lot of questions about their intention to control state power and the nature of the state. The Nigerian state, which is a colonial creation, is too powerful and centralized hence the struggle for its power and control has constituted a hindrance to its development. With the aid of hindsight, it is known that at the heart of Nigerian's previous democratic breakdown lies the debilitating interplay of these two interrelated factors: the undemocratic method through which politics is organized and the vulnerability of electoral administration to manipulation. Until something is done about the nature of the Nigerian state and the citizens' perception of the role of the state in their existence, meaningful election that will represent the voice of the votes will be elusive. We contend that before as we go into 2023 general elections and further, an appropriate design of decentralization is highly needed. As we have seen from the centralized structure of the Nigerian federation, there is need to devolve more powers to the constituent units especially at the local level, the over centralization of power at Centre has affected the emergence of local leaders that are not responsive and accountable (Examine the case of the incumbent governor and his predecessor in Rivers State).

This is because they emerge not through the instruments of local politics but through the political parties that do not allow sufficient focus on local issues and candidates. This is why we find individuals who stay in the federal capital territory and win local council elections without a good knowledge of the immediate problems of that locality. If the ongoing process of democratic consolidation is to be meaningful, then there is need to decentralize the powers of the Nigerian state. The greatest advantage of decentralizing the powers of the Nigerian state is that it will reduce the problems associated with the struggle for control of the machinery of government at the national level. It should also be recalled that at the wake of democratization in Africa, Claude Ake (1993: p4) had also appreciated the need to restructure the African state. According to him:

Democratic elections are being to determine who will exercise the powers of the state without no question asked about the character of the state as if it has no implication for democracy.

Second, from what we have argued about the problems of Nigerian government and politics and the stand point provided above by Ekeh, Diamond, Omoruyi and Ake, the challenge remains to initiate a genuine and meaningful Programme or process of political re-orientation and re-socialization among the general populace. This can be achieved through initiating at all levels starting from primary school, a system of civil education program that will inculcate in Nigerians the spirit of democracy, civic responsibility and patriotism. In this regard, we believe that the National Orientation Agency (NOA) has to be well positioned too to take up this task. The present trend in Nigerian politics where democracy is seen to be serving every purpose including the undemocratic agendas of corrupt and abusive politicians cannot be reversed until Nigerians are properly educated on the principles and practice of democracy. It is only with the right attitude and spirit that Nigerians can demonstrate their commitment to the sustenance of democracy and therein lies the salvation of Nigeria as a democratic nation.

Finally, it may be argued that all things taken together, the signing (at last!) on Friday, February 25, 2022, the electoral Act Amendment Bill 2022 into law by President Muhammadu Buhari went down very well with most well-meaning Nigerians. Given the tortuous journey the crucial piece of legislation went through, it was a memorable historic moment. In fact, it is no doubt the most comprehensive and pragmatic effort that the national assembly of Nigeria has embarked upon since it was resolved that having a credible electoral framework is crucial for the integrity of elections and the leadership recruitment process. This electoral legislation, among other things, will ensure we cut off many forms of human interference that have always resulted in stolen elections in Nigeria. Some of the key provisions in the Electoral Act Amendment Bill that Mr. President signed into law includes: Clause 3 (3): Clause 8 (5): Clause 28: Clause 29 (1): Clause 33: Clause 34: Clause 47: Clause 50: Clause 51: Clause 54 (2): Section 64 (9) Clause 65: Clause 94 etc. The issues identified by these clauses are practical responses to the realities of the Nigerian electoral experience, as distilled by stakeholders, processed by the legislature, and codified into legislation to raise the quality of Nigeria's democracy.

If faithfully implemented, it means we may have seen the last of the sort of thing that happened in a recent bye-election in Imo State where INEC officials were abducted along with electoral materials. There should be no more need for ballot box snatching, falsification of results and the use of military, police, other security personnel and armed political thugs to alter election results at the collation centres. In other words, the notion that the collation centre is the "real" place where elections are "won and lost" should be a thing of the past because the public will know results in real time. The Independent National electoral Commission, INEC, which has stoutly fronted the technological reforms of our electoral process, now has legal backing to transmit results from the polling units to its national portal where all Nigerians view it live. With this landmark achievement, post-election litigation will be brought to manageable levels. Hopefully, our increasingly technologically-driven elections will eventually be stripped of its primitive and violent attributes. With more technological advancements, people will be able to vote from their homes and the media will be able to announce results as they come in.

We give President Buhari a pat on the back for signing this amendment into law, though we believed this should have been done well before now. As he basks in the glow of this achievement, we will never forget the fact that he did not lead from the front to sanitize our electoral law. Some claim he was pushed to do it, but we should also know he could have maintained his veto if he wanted to do so. Had Buhari been proactive enough, this Bill should have been signed in 2018 or even earlier. The Bill went to his table a record six times and cost the nation needlessly. We call on him to make up for lost time by shunning undue partisanship and supporting the INEC to give Nigerians free, fair, credible and violence-free elections henceforth. Buhari should cast aside any perceived partisan toga, while donning the statesman's garb as we approach 2023.

Whatever anyone may have said to President Buhari about these clauses particularly Clause 84, relevant as it is to the interest of a self-seeking, alimantal minority, the feelings of the larger majority, and the future of Nigeria's democracy, should be more important to him. President Buhari should be more interested in keeping his promise that he intends to leave Nigeria's electoral framework better than he met it. He has nothing to lose for doing so. He would be remembered for moving the needle forward in the direction of public good. A free, fair and credible general election in 2023 will diminish his erstwhile shortcomings and define his democratic legacy.

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